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Subject: Loving and Hating.

# PLYMOUTH PULPIT:

A Weekly Publication

OF

# SERMONS

PREACHED BY

## HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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# LOVING AND HATING.

SUNDAY EVENING, MARCH 28, 1869.

"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me."—Matt. x. 37, 38.

"And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he can not be my disciple."—Luke xiv. 25, 26.

The most extraordinary thing that occurs in this passage is, that it is the language of one who was supposed to be seeking to build up a party. It had excited universal interest. Men were not only inquisitive, but their curiosity had become morbidly strong. He could go nowhere, that the village or town or city did not pour forth its multitude. And if he were a partisan, if he had a new church to found, a new kingdom to establish, this was a very strange welcome to those who were coming toward him and to him. Never was there before, and never has there been since, I apprehend, such a speech made to those that professed to be willing and desirous to follow another.

Not only that, but considering it in its relation to entering upon a Christian or Christlike life, upon a religious course, was there ever such a discouragement, as it stood, and as it stands? Usually, men are supposed to think that there are obstacles enough in their way. At any rate, men have a strife against their own feelings; against the social influences that surround them; against old habits; against many insidious and cunning temptations; and our Saviour himself declared that the way to eternal life was narrow, and very steep, and extremely difficult. And was it necessary to heap additional difficulties on the threshold? Was it necessary to carry language to such an extent as to say, "Unless a man hate his father, and his mother, and his wife, and his sister, and his brother, and his child,

Lesson: 1 Peter iv. 7-16. Hymns (Plymouth Collection): Nos. 142, 270, 719.

and himself also, he shall not be my disciple"? What is a man, after he has dropped off all his affections? What is there left for discipleship? What is a man worth that has been taught by some fanaticism to hate his father and his mother? Is that a part of the new faith? Is that the best disclosure of this princely religion which men are so fond of talking about? Is this the upshot of it? No. So far as the immediate application of this language to those who were following him was concerned, we are to take into consideration that they were following on a wrong scent. They were men who were not religious-minded, and not at all purposed to be religious-minded. For the most part, that was not the thing for which they followed Christ. They supposed—and his miracles largely confirmed the impression—that a grand good time was coming, in which all men would enjoy themselves. They were going to keep their sins; they were going to keep their feuds; they were going to keep their little quarrels; bread was going to be plenty; there was to be good living for every one; their enemies were going to be smitten down; they were going to have a gloriously good time; they were going to be men and swine indifferently, as they had been before; and Christ was going to lead. What they were after was the loaves and the miracles. It was not Christ that they sought when they were following Christ, but their own pelf. Self-indulgence, in a larger sphere, ministered by divine power, in a miraculous way; the gratification of their vanity by victories over their adversaries; and various malign feelings—these entered largely into the composition.

But it is not strange in the light of what occurred, during the last three years of his earthly career, in his intercourse with his disciples. On his last journey toward Jerusalem, and while they were approaching the place of his last suffering, there fell out among his bosom disciples—and one who was involved in it was absolutely and literally his bosom disciple—a scene which reveals the real moral state of those that were with him, and shows the necessity that there was of some such dealing as that employed in our text. By turning to the tenth chapter of Mark, we shall find that scene recounted:

"James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came unto him"—another evangelist modifies it so far as to say that the mother came bringing her two sons; and she is represented as having spoken to Christ, while here the men themselves are represented as speaking to him; both statements probably being true, and relating to the same history—"James and John"—strange names, especially that of John, when we consider his repute, as the affectionate, the pure, the thoroughly-inspired disciple, to be involved in such business as this!—"James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldst do for us whatever we shall desire."

That is it, the world over. Men want a religion that will do for them just what they desire.

"And he said unto them, what would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory."

This was a confidential communication between these office-seekers and the President that was to be!

"Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask."

He understood what they supposed his kingdom was to be; but the real kingdom was to be a very different one; and his mind passed from the ignoble conception which they had, to the larger one; and, with a kind of ineffable pity and sadness, he said, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"

They, simple and foolish, and with the frankness of absolute ignorance, jumped to answer, "We can."

"And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal, shall ye be baptized; but to sit on my right hand and on my left hand, is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared."

Now, there were ten other men who wanted just this office.

"When the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you; but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister"—your waiter—"and whosoever of you will be chiefest, shall be servant of all."

What a singular insight this is into the actual condition of the hearts of the best men that Christ met, and whom he had selected as his own disciples—and that, too, after they had heard him for two years or more! On this last solemn journey to his crucifixion, and under the very shadow of the cross, two of the disciples were squabbling as to who should have precedence in his earthly kingdom; and a third was already drawing near to that temptation by which he betrayed his Master, and gave him over to death!

If this was the condition of the hearts of the best men, what do you suppose was the condition of the hearts of the great rabble that followed Christ, pouring out of cities and villages? Do you not suppose that they were thinking of the chances which the new kingdom would afford for the gratification of their lower nature? Do you not suppose their thoughts were occupied with the fish and bread that they would have to eat; the indolence which they would enjoy; the

sins in which they would be permitted to indulge; all manner of licenses which they would have in things iniquitous and corrupt? And was it not necessary that there should be some incisive teaching on the part of Christ? Did he not need to turn back and say to these people, "Do not think that you are following a true religion with your present mind. So far are you from it, that not one of you could follow me. You love a thousand things better than you do me; you love your own households better; you love your own will better; you love your own pleasure better; and yet, my service is one of pure loving. In the state of pure love, there is nothing higher than love; and he that loves, must be willing to give up, for the sake of his love, every thing but honor"?

So Christ says, "My kingdom is a kingdom of love; and he that does not come to me, and love me more than he loves any thing else, is not worthy of me. My love can not be bought at any price less than that. You must give me the uttermost of love, or I will not take it."

Consider, also, this teaching in its apparent demoralizing effect. Literally taken, the words in Luke shock us. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he can not be my disciple." There are none of those little quirks which people are fond of putting into their sentences nowadays—those precautionary interjected clauses. It is not, "If any man come to me, and, *as it were*, hate not his father, and, *as it were*, hate not his mother." It is straight as an arrow, and is shot as from a warrior's bow right at the heart.

There is somebody in terrible earnest here; and there is something here that is worthy of this earnestness.

A religion which really made it a fundamental condition that a man should strip off all his tenderness, and all his gentleness, and all the thousand affections which God is at such infinite pains to cultivate; a religion that overturned the family, and destroyed the relations between parents and children, and all the other relationships which have sprung up in the heart—such a religion would ruin itself in less than a generation. It would turn into a bitterness which would be worse than the most malignant fanaticism. Therefore, we suspect this to be metaphorical language. And if you turn to Matthew, you see exactly what the interpretation is.

"He that loveth father or mother *more than me* is not worthy of me." If a man loves any human being more than Christ he is not worthy of Christ—that is the declaration. It does not follow that you must dispossess yourself of all human loves in order to love Christ acceptably; but it does follow that whenever any human love

comes in competition with divine love, there is to be not one single moment of weighing, not one single moment of chaffering, not one single moment of hesitation. For our earthly loves are but so many silver steps leading us up to the great golden love of God. We learn how to love God by learning how to love our earthly parents. And yet, as I shall show by and by, it comes to pass, frequently, that these loves, which ought to take us to God, only stand between God and our souls. And then the question is, Which of the two shall we take, if we can not carry both? We ought to love them in perspective. We ought to begin by loving on earth, and then love all the way up, so that the heart shall find no discord, and no disseverering of itself. Loving at the least should go on loving to the very greatest. But when, in the various vicissitudes in which men's wickedness places them, God's love stands on one side, and human love stands on the other; when affection is one way, and duty the other; when affection cleaves to the earth, and aspiration and manhood tend in the other direction—there is not to be a moment's doubt as to which way a man shall go. He is not to follow his love toward unmanliness, and toward the world, but is to follow his conscience and faith toward heaven and toward God.

Only that which comes between the soul and God, then, is to be spurned and sacrificed. If any affection, how dear soever it may be, persists in coming between the soul and God, then it is to be treated like an adversary. If, in your upward tendency, there circle around between you and your Saviour the dearest friendship or love, you are to say to it, "I will love you, but I must love Christ more," and press it away. If it come again, and again, and again, and every time with more emphasis, you must press it away, and say, "Nay; Christ first, and then thee." But if it become pertinacious, yea, aggressive; if it be an affection that will not let you rest, but assails you, and seeks to drag you down, and undo you, then you must use a lordlier tone, and say, "Get thee away!" But if still, against your whole power, against your purest self, against your higher nature, it seeks to strip you of all that belongs to you in common with God, then *hate* it. If it comes to that, put your soul against it, as you do against an enemy, no matter what the love is; for any love that will take you away from God will in the end take you away from your best self—from your hope and aspiration.

No man can interpret this intensity of feeling except from the analogy and experience of love. For when one is in earnest in love, when the very summer of loving is reached, that love must rule, no matter what suffers, and no matter what is sacrificed. How strangely we see this in life! and how beautiful is the exemplification that life gives us of this great truth!

In the household, to the child that always has been docile, and has yielded readily to counsel, the hour and the moment comes, and love dawns in the heart to some kindred soul. And growing, as the spring grows, fragrant, musical, sweetly blossomed all over, this great love takes possession of the whole soul; and, if it is not thwarted, it throws new light upon father and mother, upon God, and upon duty; and the world is transformed, and people are transfigured; and the glory of God rests upon all. Oh! that the virgin simplicity and freshness of a true love could abide! Oh! that those rude winds of experience did not shake down all the freshness of the dew that rests upon a true love! Oh! that it could be kept and carried on. Alas! of all the sad things in this world, the shattering of early love is the saddest! But while the soul stands towering in the greatness of this new and conscious love, let friends seek to separate those that thus love, and see with what strange avulsion the lover turns away from friends. And if the friends persist, see how the lover begins to gather winter on his brow, and in his eyes to look ice. And if the friends still persist, and would fain rend asunder this new-found life between soul and soul, how does the lover set at naught parents, and brothers, and sisters, and friends, and neighbors, and give up every thing, and go out of the father's house disinherited and a pauper, rather than give up the one loved! Thus is fulfilled in your own household the very figure of the Saviour.

A great love will have its own way, and will array itself against, and hate, whatever thing shall attempt to estop it. And Christ says, "When the greatness of the soul's love to me is taken into the heart, every thing which hinders it must be put down. And if it contends, it is to be hated and counted an enemy. In other words, you are to do by Christ just what you do in the household, and by each other.

Do you not see, now, that the offensiveness of this declaration is taken away? Does not this explanation bring it within the bounds of true sympathy? Is there not something very noble in it? Would you want one like Christ to come with such a love as his for you, and then be content with any thing short of this heroic and overflowing love on your part? Would you want God to come to your soul, and suffer you to give to him a farthing's worth of love—a mere penurious parceling out of your affection, such as you bestow upon many others? It would not be worthy of the divine nature. It would blast all our hope and all our joy, which stand in the greatness and the inexpugnable integrity of God.

Consider, further, that such love to Christ is not necessarily developed in such inflammatory forms as to require this action; and that this declaration represents the ultimate necessity, and not the

average experience. For, where men have been brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, it frequently happens that, all their affections having been trained together, they are in such a state of preparation that, when the hour of religious development comes, and they come into sympathy with Christ, they come whole-hearted. And such persons are never called to choose. There is no need of choice, in their cases. Thus, men's circumstances sometimes favor them, help them, instead of hindering them.

There are those who find that their social relationships interfere with their religious development, and of whom we shall speak in a moment; but there are many others whose parents, whose brothers and sisters, whose households, whose teachers, whose familiar friends, are already of Christ; and such persons are doing violence to themselves not to go toward Christ in a true love; and when the hour comes, and their hearts begin to move heavenward, every thing helps them. They never are called to put to proof this command of Christ.

I have in me that which would lead me to fight and die before I would see a robber dispossess me of my treasure in my house. I probably shall never have occasion to test it; but it is there. Do you suppose any thing would terrify me if I knew that my children, or my servants, or any that were under my roof, toward whom I feel as a general feels toward his soldiers, were in danger? If a murderer or robber, with intrusive violence, were to enter my dwelling, would I not, without hesitation, and with pistol and club in hand, let them know what generalship was? And so would any man that was not a sneak. A man who runs away from a thief in his house is a sneak, and does not deserve a house. No man that will suffer himself to be despoiled, and will put all that he has in his castle at the mercy of the robber and the murderer, because it is not prudent to risk any thing, is beneath contempt. There would be less of crime, if the community had a higher sense of manhood under such circumstances. This spirit is in me; but I probably shall never have an opportunity of putting it in practice—and partly because it is known to be there! You probably will not; but still, if the time should come, would you not play the part of men? He that suffers his house to be broken open, and his goods to be spoiled, when he could at some personal risk hinder it, is not worthy of citizenship; is not worthy of the name of patriot; is not worthy to be my neighbor; is not worthy to be called a man. You may never be called to put to proof that courage, that fidelity, and that feeling of responsibility as a citizen and a man, which would lead you, at any moment, to peril your life, rather than that a vile insult should be left staining you and your household; yet it must be there.

It is the same in regard to our Saviour. There are thousands and thousands of instances in which men are not called, and most of you probably will not be called, to choose between Christ and some other object of affection; but if the time should ever come in which you were called to make the choice, then the feeling of love to Christ, stronger than love for any thing else, must be developed.

I do not come to-night, therefore, to say that the first evidence which you give of religion must be that you are willing to give up every body. I do not want you should give up any body. I do not present the Lord Jesus Christ to you to-night, saying, "If you love him, you must be conscious in your soul of not loving your father and your mother." I do not say that when his bright image dawns on your heart, you must feel that every thing else drops and falls away. I preach no such doctrine. But I do say, that when called of Christ, and your conscience bears testimony to the higher duty of loving him, if you find that you are hindered from the full discharge of your love, you must have that latent resource of fidelity to your affection which shall enable you to dispossess every thing and every body, and mount up to Him that is chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. But it is an alternative in the soul, and not an experience to be used every day.

This reserve power being within us, there will be occasions, perhaps more than some suspect, for the use of it. Sometimes, for instance, parents are absolute unbelievers in religion—nay, are even haters of the truth. It is not needful to show by what steps they have become so; but there are parents who seem to have a feeling of hatred toward the truth. And to them it is a cause, not only of grief, but of anger and positive rage, when their children begin to have religious aspirations and religious yearnings. When the religious life begins to dawn in their children, I have known parents to be filled with quarrelsomeness and bitter opposition. And if the child is very timid, or is not conscientious, it is trampled down and overborne. Yet how sad it is that there should be hearts that sigh and cry, homesick for God and for heaven, all their life, and that there should be none to run to their succor! There are many who can neither go to Christ, nor get over their longing to go, such is the domination of their parents. They can not give up their desire to follow Christ, and yet they dare not openly follow him. Woe be to him who neither walks in the way of godliness, nor will suffer them to walk there who fain would! Woe be to him who will not hear the voice of God, nor suffer them to hear it whose open ear listens for the call out of heaven! Such there are; and to such I say, Though your father and your mother deride you; though they threaten you with all ill-will and disinheritance; though they annoy

you with excessive annoyances, nevertheless, Christ says, "He that loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."

Sometimes parents are very worldly-minded, though in a certain sort they are believers, and profess to be believers. There are many who believe just enough to shield their consciences, and save themselves from being counted infidel. They believe in a kind of mutual protective Christianity, which takes care of their anxieties and fears, and allays all their trouble in these respects—nothing more. The idea of a perfected manhood, of a cleansed conscience, and of a purified heart; the idea of an imagination radiant with intersphering, heavenly truths; the idea of a great overruling affection, that like a sun pours its light down upon all lesser affections, has not occurred to them. It is no part of their conception. They have no desire in that direction. They have a *church* religion. They say, "If I will give up so much every Sunday, if I will pay the minister, if I will go to church, if I will read the Bible, if I will do this, that, and the other thing, religion, will you take care of me?" And that kind of religion always says, "Yes, I will insure you." And so there are hundreds and thousands of people in the community who have just religion enough not to have any at all! The little religion which they already have is put out. They say, "We believe in religion; but it is a reasonable, rational religion. This world is a good world, and God has given the bounties of this world to enjoy; and a grateful heart should take these bounties and enjoy them. Therefore let us eat and drink, and praise God by being happy." And so party after party, and dance after dance, and elegant debauch after elegant debauch, follow. They want society to be radiant and sparkling. And for them, any thing but the undertones of the judgment-day to come; any thing but those long wails that set in from the other world, as the surf thunders on the shore, telling of distant storms; any thing but a religion that disturbs their brilliant, sparkling life.

Under such circumstances, a child, much loved and beautiful, whose curls are beautiful, whose eyes are beautiful, whose brow is beautiful, whose lips are beautiful, over whose face advancing years throw grace, whose deepening sensibility gives more beauteous expression to that which nature made beautiful at first, who is the coyest, sweetest, charmingest creature of the whole neighborhood, and who is the admiration of every one—such a child, just at the time when the father and mother have anticipated that she would come out, and make a sensation, and walk easily queen, is vexatiously convicted and converted. And there is all their trouble. If it had not been for that Methodist meeting, if it had not been for that ranting preacher, over there, it would not have happened! And here is

this huge discord in this family. Here is the child that was the joy of their hearts, and the pride of their life, and that was to form such a splendid connection, (for already there were ever so many eyes directed that way,) and was to build up their family, carried away with religious excitement. And all their hopes are crushed. The father is in a rage, and the mother is in a grief; and they will not have it so. The child, with simple modesty, is patient but tenacious, and cures storms in the outer circle by the deep peace which God gives the soul in the closet. She is still loving, and more obedient than ever; but she is true to her own inward love. Having tasted the better portion, she will not give it up. And so great has sometimes been the rage of the father that he has actually driven his child from his door, and dispossessed her. It was such a case that gave birth to one of our most touching hymns. I could almost wish that there might be more persons driven out from home under the same circumstances.

The child of a wealthy man in England who had all his earthly hopes fixed on her, returning from a ball, heard a Methodist meeting going on, and went in; and the recital of what the love of Christ had done for various persons charmed her; and by the blessing of God's Spirit, she was converted. And when she made known her faith and purpose, her father cast her off, and she was obliged to go away from home. And this hymn resulted from that circumstance:

Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow thee;
Naked, poor, despised, forsaken,
Thou, from hence, my all shalt be.
Perish every fond ambition,
All I've sought, or hoped, or known;
Yet how rich is my condition!
God and heaven are still my own.

Let the world despise and leave me,
They have left my Saviour, too;
Human hearts and looks deceive me,
Thou art not, like them, untrue;
And whilst thou shalt smile upon me,
God of wisdom, love, and might,
Foes may hate, and friends may scorn me;
Show thy face, and all is bright.

Man may trouble and distress me,
'Twill but drive me to thy breast,
Life with trials hard may press me,
Heaven will bring me sweeter rest.

Oh! 'tis not in grief to harm me,
While thy love is left to me;
Oh! 'twere not in joy to charm me,
Were that joy unmixed with thee.

Soul, then know thy full salvation,
Rise o'er sin, and fear, and cares;
Joy to find in every station
Something still to do or bear.
Think what spirit dwells within thee;
Think what Father's smiles are thine;
Think that Jesus died to win thee;
Child of heaven, canst thou repine?

Haste thee on from grace to glory,
Armed by faith, and winged by prayer;
Heaven's eternal day's before thee,
God's own hand shall guide thee there.
Soon shall close thy earthly mission,
Soon shall pass thy pilgrim days;
Hope shall change to glad fruition,
Faith to sight, and prayer to praise.

It is sometimes the case that a gentle and dependent nature, leaning, and accustomed to lean round about her husband, as a vine around the strong trunk of a tree, finds that her dawning religious desires are most offensive to him. This *is* trial. We talk of death, we talk of bereavements, we talk of the loss of property; but I tell you, no person knows trouble till he knows it in the soul; and no person knows trouble in the soul, till he knows it as the struggle of a real, pure, and deep love. That *is* trouble. And when one has really given her life to another; twined her thoughts around his intellect; cast her imagination as a mingling beam with his radiant thoughts; divided her very self, as it were, her life counseling with his whole life—when, under such circumstances, she is called, in spite of his refusal, to step forth and be Christ's, how painful and cruel it is! And yet, over against just such an one stands the Saviour, saying, "Any person that loves husband and wife better than me is not worthy of me."

If possible, the soul's situation is even more critical when the whole life has been invested in a great love not yet consummated; when that affection, as it were, casts up streams like the northern lights, and fills the whole heavens with ever-changing, strange, and witching imaginations. For in the early days of love, there is a vast amount of imagination, and a smaller amount of deep feeling than in later days, when love consolidates, and so largely takes on the form of volition, and of conduct, and of settled character. And in these

early days of coming affection how many have made shipwreck! How many have found that they were to choose between their love and their Christ, and have not had the strength to choose Christ! And even in that moment, even in all those circumstances, blessed be God, the terms are not let down, and Christ still says, "He that loves any thing more than me, is not worthy of me." And let me tell you that any soul that, for the sake of a lower love, will give up Christ and the greater love, has become, by that very choice, less worthy of the love of that one for whom it has yielded up duty. There is nothing that consecrates the soul so much as a heroic achievement. There is nothing that renders a man or woman or child so truly lovable, and so much to be admired, as the capacity of doing a great thing in the kingdom of righteousness. And I always feel that where a child steps forth simply, gently, lovingly, in the way of duty, it is laying up admiration for after-years; because by and by it will be confessed, by those who opposed the child, that he or she was in the right.

There is many a husband who resisted his wife's importunity, and would not consent to her embracing Christianity. She nevertheless broke through his restraint by the streaming of Christ's love, and became an open and avowed Christian. And he, in after years, blessed God for her example of heroism which led him in the right way, and was the means of his conversion.

You may be sure that, when speaking of these critical cases to-night, I am not speaking without instances in my mind. I have not a few of them. There are some most tender and touching instances in this congregation, of persons whose hearts are quivering, and yearning to do their duty, and are anxious to meet the wants of love. And to all of you I say, "You will best promote even your earthly loves by listening to the voice of the Lord. Take Christ, and you can not lose any thing that will be a final loss. Take Christ, and he will give you back a thousand-fold more than you abandon for his sake." In another evangelist it is said that those who follow Christ in all things, forsaking father and mother, husband and wife, and houses and lands, receive again, in this world, all that they have given up, and in the world to come life eternal; and in thousands of instances the very heroism by which one dispossesses himself is blessed, in the spirit of God, to the recovery of the thing lost.

Many a mother has offered her sick child to God, saying, "Take it, if thou wilt;" and from that hour the child began to recover; and God gave it back to her. Many a man has stood on the brink of destruction in his ambition, or in his property relations, and said, "Lord, thy will be done;" and in that act he has become a fit stew-

ard of his property; and God has restored it to him. And so, many and many a one who trusts God and loves Christ, and is willing to yield obedience to the divine will, but is hindered, will soon find that the very obstacles which stood in his way have a new tendency, and are helping him.

There are cases of a different nature, as where one is called to follow Christ into another church, leaving that in which he was bred. Such cases can never occur in this church, because the door out of it is just as wide as the door into it. The spirit of this church is such that if you live Christianly you may live in the communion of any church that you shall select on the earth. There is no denomination and no sect with us. You may go into the Presbyterian church, and you shall go with my good will, and the good will of your brethren. You may go into the Swedenborgian sect, and you shall carry with you my good will and your brethren's. You may join the Episcopalians, and my hearty "God bless you" shall go with you. You may unite yourself to the hoary old Roman Church, and still I will say, "God bless you." There are in that church means of grace enough to save any soul that will be faithful to its light and to its duties. And although I think there are some churches which are far preferable to others, although I think the likelihood of becoming eminent in the Christian life is greater in some communions than in others, yet I believe there are none so far from Christ that you can not have guiding light enough in them. So, instead of fighting churches, I prefer to spend the whole force of my life in giving emphasis to the inward life of godliness. Therefore, I say to you, Live as becometh the children of Christ, and then go where you please. I will not hinder you.

But it is not so everywhere. There are many churches that believe there is salvation in other churches; while there are many that say boldly, "There is no salvation out of this church. You must be saved by this church, if saved at all." If they think so, I do not see how they are going to save themselves from being bigoted. If a man believes there is salvation by staying in a certain church, and damnation by going out of it, I do not wonder that he resorts to violence and persecution such as have existed in all past ages, and such as will continue to exist, I suppose, in all ages to come.

Single individuals, and even single churches, here and there, are tolerant and liberal; but no denomination is tolerant and liberal as a whole. There is no denomination that loves Christ more than it loves the organization of religion on earth. I fear that, taken as a whole, the human element in the church is loved more than religion itself.

And so it comes to pass, frequently, that persons are drawn out

of the church in which they were reared. They say, "I shall die where I am. I am like a tree in an old orchard where the ground is exhausted, and I long to be transplanted in fresh soil." And it is better, oftentimes, that persons should change their church connections. There are persons in this congregation that I think would be better off if they could go somewhere else. I have labored so long without producing much effect upon them, that I can not but think another hand and another soil would bring from them more fruit than they bear here. And I see persons in other congregations that I think would be profited more here than there. And sometimes they think so. Restraints are brought to bear on them, and they are kept where they are; but there are many who look up and out, and long to follow their true light. They are smothering. And they say, "I never can live a Christian life where I am." In God's name, then, go where you can. There may be a thousand reasons why you should be patient, and permit those who are in authority over you to have their full way for persuasion; but when the time comes that you say, "My Lord is not here, and if I am to live a Christian life I must go where I can get light and nourishment," then it is your duty to go. If you love any thing more than Christ in you the hope of glory, woe be to you!

There are those who are called from a skeptical life. Skeptics generally think they have no human nature. They are accustomed to think that they have hereditary beliefs; and they orb themselves into a sort of philosophical liberty, and feel that they, being free and manly, and going where they please, have almost dispossessed human nature. But human nature is about the same in the skeptic that it is in the believer. There is about the same cowardice in the one that there is in the other. The skeptic does not dare to follow his own reason, because people will ridicule him; and the believer does not dare to follow his convictions for the same reason. Where a man, having thrown overboard the church and religion, is by and by met by God's Spirit, and the old truths begin to have new buds in him, he can not but yearn. And human nature being just the same in that man that it is in you, he can not help thinking what people would say who have heard him reason as he has reasoned, if they knew what a change had come over his feelings. He can not help saying, "What will my companions think and do?" And he is just as much in the thrall of fear as any one. And if any person feels, "I am steadily coming to a clearer faith; my heart is yearning, and becoming deeper and deeper in its needs," I say to him, "O sinner!" —for he is just that, and nothing else—"if Christ calls you, rise up and follow him. If any thing stands between you and Christ, you are not worthy of him."

Consider the boldness and the generousness of the spirit of this passage; and the nobleness with which men should come to Christ, as indicated here. Consider what Christ is; and especially, what he is to *you*. Consider what it is to have one who is in himself the sum of all those excellences which, in their separate and scattered elements, you so much admire, and desire to see, among men. I not only think of God along that line of analogy which is derived from human nature and human character, but I love to think that there is in him a perfection of these things which I see and admire in their simple forms in men. My God is, above all other things, Poet. I that admire Shakespeare, and Milton, and Chaucer, love to think that these were shoots thrown out, and that the great Singer is my God. I follow the footsteps of men that have walked in the way of beauty —the carvers, and painters, and builders, and makers of music—all the children of art; and I say, When we stand with God, we shall find him to be the great Architect, the great Builder, the great Moulder of beauty, the great Painter. He lets us see from day to day something of the frescoes which he has painted in the heaven that is above our head with a prodigality that is amazing. And I love to think of God as the sum of all these excellences. Wiser is he than the wisest statesman that attracts admiration; more eloquent than the finest speaker; more lordly than the bravest warrior; more kingly than the highest potentate; more glorious than the most beauteous spirit that ever walked upon the earth. All that you see in the faculties of men orb themselves up and form in him infinite attributes. And there is a wealth in him, such that when you stand in his presence alone, it will be as if you stood in the midst of the whole universe of poets, and artists, and orators, and noble natures, God himself being all of them, and the fountain from which all of them draw their supplies.

And oh! that he should want my soul! I have no doubt that many a woman has said, when asked to be the wife of some great nature, "It can not be!" True love is always modest. It is always grateful. It always wonders, "Why am I beloved?" It always says, "How can I repay this love?" And to think that God wants me! To think that this glorious excellence, the plenitude of the beauty and power and wisdom of heaven, comes to me—nay, that it comes to me in the manifestation of Jesus Christ; that it comes to me with all the sweetness of attraction, and with all the self-sacrifice and suffering of dying love! And yet God, from whose brow flames beauty, and in whose bosom love proudly sits, says to me, "My son, give me thy heart," and proffers his own; and if I were generous, with what quick response should I love him! If I were honorable, with what instant apprehension should I go to him! If I were possessed of true manliness, should I not know the

dignity of this proffer? Should I not know what affection that was with which I was called?

No magistrate can call you without imposing on you some sense of honor. If one who stands in a high place notices you, and puts confidence in you, it affords you pleasure and gratification. Every man especially feels that it is a great honor to receive attention from one occupying the supreme position in the nation. And yet, he that is higher than stars, higher than suns, higher than angels, higher than princes and powers and principalities, higher than all, and whose name is above every name, deigns to call you his child and to offer you a Father's affection, and a Redeemer's love, and says, "Come, be mine, and follow me!"

Oh! be ashamed of those equivocations with which you meet this call. Be ashamed of your hesitancy. Be ashamed, above all, of weighing the love of God against your interest. A man says, "Which is worth more, my pleasure or my God?" A man says, "I am young and fresh, and God is great and generous, and I will take my pleasure until I am thirty-five or forty years old; and then, when the quick edge of satisfaction shall have worn off, I will take my old age to God!" Is there in hell any thing that is meaner, or any thing that is more dishonoring to a true manhood, than that? If God's love is worth having, it is worth repaying with yours from the very morning of your life, and the whole of it, and in endless continuity. Men say, "Which is better, the love of God, or my riches? Can I not keep them both? or, can I not keep this awhile, and then take that?" And so they put off the love of God and the obedience of the Gospel, hoping that at the last day, on their dying-bed, something will be wrought by which, having lived to the flesh—to vanity, and pride, and lust, and all that is worldly and ungodly—they shall be varnished over and get into heaven. O beggarly men! my soul revolts at such meanness as this.

Lord, thee and thee only, I choose. Now thy enemies are my enemies. If they be in my heart, they are my enemies still. Though they be in my household, if they hate thee, I will hate them! Do not I hate them that hate thee? O Lord! search me, try me, and see if there be any evil way in me. Thus I have covenanted that I will be thine in time, and thine in eternity.

I bless God that he will take no less. He would not be the glorious God that he is, if he would barter the sublime treasure of his heart's love for a miserable divided love of such hearts as ours.

I leave my message with you to-night. It is a word in time for some of you. It ought to be a word in time to many more. Called ever since you have been old enough to know the sound of the mother's voice; called often by the uprising of a stimulated conscience

in your own bosom; called by many marked providences; called by sickness and by fear; called by disaster and bereavement; called by examples which you have seen round about you; called by sympathies; called by your own reason; called by many solemn hours of reflection; called by that slow-swinging bell that has announced to you the departure of a soul; called by the remembrances of your childhood; called by the heavens above you, and by the earth beneath you; called in a thousand ways, and again and again called, is it not time, at last, to listen? Is it not time, at last, to say, "Lord, I am thine"?

May God bring you heartily and joyfully to this submission of your soul to Christ; and may the light of heaven not cease to shine upon that path in which thereafter you shall walk, until you stand in Zion and before God.

## PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We rejoice that thou art God our all, eternal, supreme, and all-powerful. In thy wide realm, thou art ruling by law, and governing all things. And though, in the confusion and rush, it seems at times as if all were lost, there is to thee neither confusion nor disorder. All things are firmly held. All things move as they are ordered. And thou dost behold the sequences from the beginning to the end, and dost ordain them. We rejoice, O Lord our God! in thy power, though sometimes we stand trembling, and in awe of its manifestation. How can we fear when thou art father-hearted? How can we fear when we know that supreme over every thing else in the universe is thy love? How can we fear when we are in the midst of trouble, when we are in the darkness of the thickest night that ever befalls us, when pains take hold upon us, and sorrows and disappointments are round about us, if we hear thee saying, "All things work together for good"? We can not behold how; but who sees thy hand laying the path out of to-day into to-morrow? Who can behold the bridge by which thou dost plant the mighty gulfs over which we come safely? Thou hast commanded thine angels, and they minister. Airy servitors they are, fulfilling thy behest, and procuring our good. "The angels of the Lord encamp round about them that fear him;" and if our eyes were open to discern, as did the prophet's servant, how many more would there be for us than against us! For, "if God be for us, who can be against us?" And in that joy and faith may we take up our song. May we not be afraid, nor turn back from duty. Though we seem brought to the very perilous edge of the gulf, and hear voices of thunder therein, at thy command may we go forward still. For thou canst lift us up so that we shall not dash our foot against a stone. We rejoice, O Lord! in this supreme trust which thou dost both permit and command. For, how are we lifted up and delivered from the thrall of our senses! How are we pursued from day to day by cares that we need not have! How many burdens oppress us that are unnecessary burdens! How unwilling are we to take the only burden which is light, and the only yoke which is easy—thy burden and thy yoke! Our own burdens—oh! how heavy they are. And though thou hast commanded us, "Cast thy cares upon him, for he careth for you," how unwilling are we! How often we have carried trouble in our closet to thee, and carried it back again! How

often we have carried our burdens to lay them at thy feet, and behold, again they were upon us! How often we have sought deliverance that was open to us had we faith to enter in and take our release; but behold, again we are in prison! Oh! grant that we may have that faith of thine ancient servants, who stood within at midnight, while their keepers and others slept, and sung praises and prayed unto God; and for us let there be deliverance as there was for them. May we be able to go forth out of the stocks, and out of the darkness of the prison-house, and out of the thrall of the enemies of our souls, and find that liberty which becomes the sons of God. Why are we sodden with care, whom all God's love doth tend? Why are we fearful of to-morrow, saying, What shall we eat, and what shall we drink? when we are heirs with Jesus Christ—heirs of God to an eternal inheritance? What matters it if we live, or if we die; or, dying, whether it be to-day or to-morrow, if living or dying we are the Lord's?

Oh! that thou wouldst give us some conception worthy of our character and our destiny! Awake in us the faith that we are the sons of God; that we have a right to thy throne; that thou art ours; that thou dost abide with us, and in us, and call us to abide in thee. And may we walk worthy of this vocation. May we not cast ourselves down before the lesser powers, and vail the glory that thou dost shed upon us. May all the light of Christ's love, and all the peace which he gives to his disciples, shine forth from our faces from day to day, so that men shall know that we have a refuge; that we have a companion, secret and invisible, with whom we hold sweet communion; that there is a way for our souls, hidden from care, hidden from assault—a secret way of faith, whereby we are able to ascend, and leave all our mortal foes beneath us.

Oh! grant that our true experience might be deepened, and that there might be given to us a power of faith, such that others might be influenced by our testimony. Thou hast forgiven our sins. Lord Jesus, how many need forgiveness of sins, and are burdened, to-night! Oh! that there was some testimony from us of the power of Christ to forgive sins. Many there are in thy presence that rejoice in the fullness of thy salvation. How many there are that are in twilight, and are stumbling upon the rude path of duty, who need this testimony! Grant that they may not vail their experience or their testimony, but breathe forth, or proclaim, every hour, what the Lord hath done for them, that men may believe that there is power with God on earth, that it is in thine hand to forgive sin, or to heal the body, as thou wilt.

Grant that we may feel that thou art walking amidst us, more divine even than when clothed in flesh; more powerful; gentler; more full of sympathy. Thou hast taken back to thyself all the infinite attributes of divinity; and that which was vailed, and showed itself but a little on earth, now flames abroad with eternal light in heaven; and all thy power is ours. Thou art bringing thy sons back to glory. Grant that the power of Christ may be manifested in us, and that our faith in his presence and power may be manifest to all round about us.

Grant that the word to-night may be preached with simplicity and directness; with godly fear and sincerity; and may it be a word of power to many souls, comforting, strengthening, dissuading from evil, and persuading toward good. And grant that the seed sown from Sabbath to Sabbath, in this house, may be seed in good ground, and bring forth abundantly. We thank thee that there is so much life and power in thy truth. We thank thee that we see its life and power, as well as feel it. We thank thee that there are so many who have joyful faces from week to week, that are testifying to what the Lord hath done for them. We thank thee that there are those who, though they give no outward testimony, yet give inward testimony in the household. How many there are that have been

long unhealed, but that, having touched the hem of Christ's garment, behold they are well! Grant that more and more may be healed, and that this place may be filled with those that have occasion to bless the name of Jesus Christ.

Keep us while we live. Make us useful. Bring us at last to death, not afraid to die—longing to go forth and be with Christ, which is better than life.

And to thy name shall be the praise, Father, Son, and Spirit, evermore. *Amen.*

## PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

OUR Father, we beseech of thee that thou wilt set the truth home to every heart. We thank thee that so many have ceased to be reluctant, and have closed with the offers of salvation, and are blessed. We thank thee that so many are scattered along the path at various stages, all tending upward, working out their own salvation with fear and trembling. We beseech of thee that those who stand looking wistfully forward may be persuaded. Grant, we pray thee, that those who hear the call of God afar off may listen until its articulations become distinct, and they hear the Saviour saying, "Give me thine heart. Love me more than all others." Oh! grant that this love, beginning, may purge away all impure affections; all gross pleasures; all habits of selfishness and self-indulgence. Oh! that thou wouldst lift us to a higher plane of manhood; to a nobler conception of life; to a more urgent and earnest determination to acquit ourselves as men. And when we shall have passed through trial and discipline and instruction and persuasion in this life, bring us to thyself, prepared to dwell with thee. And to thy name shall be the praise for evermore. *Amen.*

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